

first

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the magazine for local government

"The shortfall in special needs funding could rise to £800 million, **so more needs to be done**"

Lord Porter,
LGA Chairman

4, 22

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Local government finance deal
No long-term funding solutions



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Showcasing innovative work
Empowering elected members



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Investing in public health
A critical role for councils



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Future funding



Ministers published the provisional local government finance settlement before Christmas, and while there was some new money, there were no proposals for dealing with the long-term funding issues affecting the sector.

You can find out more about the settlement in this month's **first** (p4 and p10), as well as details of the welcome announcement of an extra £250 million to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (p4, p22).

Elsewhere in the magazine, we hear from the LGA's Independent Group about its recent annual conference (p12), and take a look at policies on reducing single-use plastic in Somerset (p13), supporting small businesses in Devon (p15), and modular housing in Nuneaton and Bedworth (p19).

We have comments on funding from Cllr Paul Carter, Chairman of the County Councils Network (p25), and on public health from Dave Buck, of The King's Fund (p27), while Dr Chris Llewelyn, the new Chief Executive of the Welsh LGA, sets out the issues facing Welsh councils in 2019 (p21).

Looking ahead, now is the time to apply to get your council's cutting-edge work showcased at the Innovation Zone at the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth in July (p16). I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Lord Porter is Chairman of the LGA

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news



LGA calls for more funding

The provisional local government finance settlement includes some additional resources for councils but fails to address the £3.1 billion funding gap they face in 2019/20, the LGA has said.

It is calling for the final settlement – expected at the end of this month or in early February – to include more funding for 2019/20, and for the Government to use this year’s Spending Review to deliver a sustainable, long-term funding settlement for local government.

The provisional settlement, published before Christmas, includes an extra £16 million for rural authorities, and £20 million to maintain the current New Homes Bonus threshold – something that will particularly benefit shire district councils.

The Government confirmed its decision to remove the downward adjustment to tariffs and top-ups for authorities that would otherwise have been in ‘negative RSG’ for 2019/20, and to fund this. A £180 million surplus on the levy account will also be returned to councils.

Aside from the one-off £650 million announced in the 2018 Budget for social care, however, there were no additional resources for children and adult services, despite the funding pressures facing these services.

There is also no clarity over funding after the current four-year deal – which most councils signed up to, and which runs out in March 2020.

Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, said: “Next year will continue to be hugely challenging for all councils, which still face an overall funding gap of £3.1 billion in 2019/20.

“It is vital that the Government uses the final settlement to provide the further resources needed to protect our local services in 2019/20 before ensuring this year’s Spending Review delivers a truly sustainable funding settlement for local government.

“As the nation continues to face huge uncertainty, it is councils who are getting on with the job of providing the services that matter to our communities. Investment in these local services, and councils’ prevention and early intervention work, is the only way councils can continue to make a positive difference to their residents’ lives.

“It will also help reduce pressures on the rest of the public sector, save money for the public purse, and contribute to the wider prosperity and wellbeing of the nation.”

Cash boost for SEND

The Government has announced £250 million for councils over the next two years, to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), after the LGA said an “emergency injection” of funding was needed.

It has also committed to a review of SEND support, which the LGA has been calling for.

However, the LGA – which has recently published a report on the funding pressures on councils supporting children with SEND – is warning of a wider deficit this year of nearly half a billion pounds.

The LGA’s report says that, for the majority of councils, services providing SEND support have reached a tipping point.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA’s Children and Young People Board, said: “The LGA has worked hard to raise concerns around the huge financial pressures on councils and schools to meet the growing demand for support for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

“We are pleased the Government has listened to our concerns and will provide an emergency injection of desperately needed money to tackle this crisis.

“While the funding will help, it will only partially address the wider £472 million deficit councils are facing in providing SEND support this year, which could grow to more than £800 million in 2019/20.

“Parents rightly expect and aspire to see that their child has the best possible education and support, and councils have done all they can to achieve this. However, councils are reaching the point where the money is simply not there to keep up with demand, pushing support for children with SEND to a tipping point.

“We want to work with government to tackle this issue, and it is good the Department for Education has accepted our call for a review of SEND support, in particular to incentivise mainstream schools to admit and support children with SEND.”



i See **p10-11** and **www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses** for more on the provisional local government finance settlement

i See **p29**. For more information, visit **www.local.gov.uk/children-and-young-people**

Packaging manufacturers to pay recycling costs

Manufacturers are to pick up the costs of paying for recycling packaging under the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy – something the LGA has long called for to help reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

Currently, councils pay 90 per cent of the bill for recycling, but – under the new strategy – this will be passed on to the product manufacturers, forcing them to think about sustainable packaging.

The measures could raise between £500 million and £1 billion per year to aid recycling and the disposal of rubbish.

The plans also include a commitment to weekly food-waste collections in every home, a deposit-return scheme and clearer labelling on packaging to show if it can be recycled.

The LGA is pleased that the burden of recycling costs has been transferred from councils to manufacturers, but has urged that any changes be fully funded. It has also warned that existing contracts between local authorities and waste collection companies mean some may not be able to implement the changes until later.

Consultations on elements of the strategy, including a core set of dry recyclables and free garden waste collections, will be published in January. The LGA will be engaging with councils and responding where appropriate.

It is encouraging councils to submit their own consultation responses and to send these to the LGA for information, by emailing sonika.sidhu@local.gov.uk.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Environment Spokesman, said: "The LGA has long called for businesses and manufacturers to pay the full cost of recycling or disposing of their packaging, and we are pleased the Government has listened to us.

"Councils have been successful in increasing recycling levels and, alongside government, recognise that even more needs to be done to boost recycling to reach national targets and even higher standards.

"It is crucial that any new system is phased in over time and still allows councils to determine how their local services work for residents, and takes account of the differences between inner-city and rural areas."



Local government honours

The leader of the LGA's Labour Group and the former Conservative leader of Trafford Council were among the local government recipients of New Year Honours.

Cllr Nick Forbes, Leader of Newcastle City Council, and Cllr Sean Anstee, a member of the LGA's City Regions Board, were both made CBEs for services to local government.

There was a damehood for Mary Ney, one of five commissioners appointed in 2015 to run Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council following the child sexual exploitation scandal. Also recognised was Ian Thomas, Rotherham's former Director of Children's Services, who becomes a CBE. He was appointed Chief Executive of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames in December.

Cllr Rory Love, Chairman of the Conservative Councillors' Association, is made an OBE for public and political services. He is Cabinet Member for Customers and Digital Delivery at Folkstone & Hythe District Council, and a member of Kent County Council.

Cllr Ivan Ould (Con), Cabinet Member for

Children and Young People at Leicestershire County Council, becomes an OBE, for services to local government. OBEs also went to Keith Ireland, former Managing Director of the City of Wolverhampton Council, for services to local government in the West Midlands; Janice Spencer, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care at Lincolnshire County Council, for services to children's social care; and Saleem Tariq, Deputy Director of Children and Families at Leeds City Council, for services to children's services.

MBE recipients include Cllr Peter Edgar (Con), Executive Member for Education at Hampshire County Council, for services to education and the community in Gosport; and his colleague Cllr Rhydian Vaughan (Con) for public and political service. Martin Angus, a Political Adviser in the LGA's Labour Group office, is made an MBE for political service.



For the full 2019 New Year's Honours list, please visit www.gov.uk

news in brief

Behavioural insights to service challenges

Eight local authorities will each receive a £25,000 grant from the LGA to help them apply behavioural insights to their biggest service challenges.

The approach is based on the idea that interventions aimed at encouraging people to make better choices for themselves and society will be more successful if they are based on insights from behavioural science, also known as 'nudge theory'.

The funded projects include reducing the proportion of local authority housing tenants in rent arrears (Wigan) and cutting the amount of litter thrown from vehicles (New Forest).

Cllr Peter Fleming, Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, said: "The LGA is funding a series of behavioural insight projects in a bid to encourage innovation, which can then be shared across the country for other organisations to benefit from."

For more information about the programme, please visit www.local.gov.uk/behavioural-insights

Ready for winter

The LGA continues to highlight council preparations for snow and bad weather. Its annual Winter Readiness Survey showed that 94 per cent of councils have either more salt in stock for this year, or the same level as they did last year, with a total of 1.4 million tonnes stockpiled. Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Transport Spokesman, said: "Across the country, local authorities have again risen to the challenge and already put measures in place to protect their residents from floods, ice, and wintry conditions."

Brexit preparations

The Government has announced several billion pounds of additional funding for Brexit preparations, including £35 million for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Ministry will act as a hub for government Brexit information for councils, but other departments are also writing to councils with specific advice and guidance. The LGA has refreshed its own Brexit information hub: www.local.gov.uk/brexit-advice-hub-local-government.

Deaths up among homeless

The Government has announced that 11 new 'rough sleeping hubs' will be set up next year through a £4.8 million project aimed at tackling rising levels of people in England sleeping on the streets.

Under the plans, thousands of vulnerable people will be able to receive specialist support to address mental health problems, and immediate shelter and rapid assessment for rough sleepers will be provided.

The announcement was followed by Office for National Statistics figures that show there were an estimated 597 deaths of homeless people in England and Wales in 2017, a figure that has increased by 24 per cent over the past five years.

More than half of all deaths were as a result of drug poisoning, liver disease or suicide: drug poisoning alone accounted for 32 per cent of the total. Men made up 84 per cent of deaths of homeless people in 2017. The average age at death was 44 for men, 42 for women and 44 for all persons between 2013 and 2017.

In comparison, in the general population of England and Wales in 2017, the average age at death was 76 for men and 81 for women.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Housing Spokesman, said: "Every death of a homeless person is preventable.

"Any extra investment will help local efforts to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. Councils are determined to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping from happening in the first place and support families affected.

"This is becoming increasingly difficult with homelessness services facing a funding gap of more than £100 million in 2019/20. Proper resourcing of local government funding is essential if we are to end rising homelessness.

"Councils also need to keep 100 per cent of the receipts of any homes they sell to replace them and reinvest in building more of the genuinely affordable homes they desperately need, and the ability to adapt welfare reforms to prevent people from losing their home where possible."



Affordable homes lost in office conversions

Communities have potentially missed out on more than 10,500 desperately needed affordable homes in the past three years as a result of government rules allowing developers to bypass the planning system, LGA analysis shows.

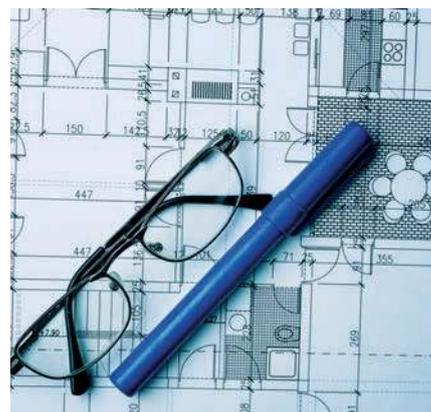
Councils say permitted development rules allowing offices to be converted into housing without planning permission are exacerbating the nation's housing affordability crisis and should be scrapped.

Since 2015, 42,130 housing units in England have been converted from offices without having to go through the planning system. As a result, they included no affordable housing or supporting investment in infrastructure such as roads, schools and health services.

The figures represent about 7 per cent of new homes nationally, but the proportion is much higher in some parts of the country. Office-to-residential conversions under permitted development rules accounted for 40 per cent of new homes in Islington, Welwyn Hatfield, Mole Valley, Croydon and Derby in 2017/18.

Alongside scrapping the existing rules, the LGA is also urging the Government to drop proposals allowing upward extensions to be built without planning permission and the demolition of existing commercial buildings for new homes without planning consent.

A survey of councils in England found that nine in 10 were concerned about the



quality, design and appropriateness of the location of housing; almost six out of 10 had fears about safety; and two-thirds thought that both contributions by developers to affordable housing and contributions for other infrastructure through Section 106 agreements had fallen.

Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Housing Spokesman, said: "Permitted development rules are taking away the ability of local communities to shape the area they live in and to ensure homes are built to high standards with the necessary infrastructure in place. This has resulted in the potential loss of thousands of desperately needed affordable homes.

"Councils, which are answerable to their residents, must be given back their ability to oversee all local developments to ensure they are good quality and help build prosperous places."

Help for disabled candidates

People with disabilities who want to stand for election to councils and other local authorities can now access a new £250,000 EnAble Fund from the Government Equalities Office, to pay for additional support.

Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, said: "Local government thrives on and values councillors, including those with disabilities, willing to put themselves forward for election so that political parties get a choice of quality candidates – those who are capable, vibrant, energetic and engaged, with a commitment to local people.

"We encourage people with disabilities and a passion for change to strongly consider becoming a councillor to ensure local communities are represented by a

diverse pool of people, otherwise they risk missing out on the best."

People with disabilities are likely to face greater costs when seeking elected office because of their disability. They can bid for a range of support from the fund – including transport for mobility impaired candidates, specialist equipment such as screen reader software, British Sign Language interpretation for hearing impaired candidates, and the transcription of campaign material into braille for visually impaired candidates

The EnAble Fund for Elected Office will run until 2020, delivered by Disability Rights UK and supported by the LGA. For more information and to apply, please telephone 0330 995 0400 and select option 1 or email enablefund@disabilityrightsuk.org

New building regulations in response to Grenfell

The Government has set out how it will implement the recommendations of the Hackitt review of building regulations and fire safety, published following the Grenfell Tower fire.

Communities Secretary James Brokenshire said the Government's 'Building a Safer Future' proposals would ensure "stronger sanctions to prevent and punish wrongdoing".

They include creating a more effective regulatory and accountability framework for keeping people safe, clearer standards and guidance for building materials, and giving residents more of a voice in the management of their properties.

LGA Chairman Lord Porter said: "Since the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the LGA has made the case for fundamental reform of the building regulations system.

"We are pleased that James Brokenshire has committed to implementing these recommendations and, where necessary, that government is going beyond them as they have done with the ban on the use of combustible materials.

"We are also pleased to be working as part of the Joint Regulators Group to develop

the proposals for the Joint Competent Authority. This will help ensure effective enforcement at a local level and that building control, fire and rescue services and the Health and Safety Executive have the powers and sanctions they need to drive cultural change."

But he added: "The definition of higher risk residential buildings in the Hackitt Review is currently too narrow. It must be extended to all buildings in which vulnerable people sleep other than private homes. Consideration must also be given to lowering the height definition of high-rise buildings from the current definition."

While legislation will take time to implement, the Government announced it is taking action to deal with the remaining buildings where private owners are not fulfilling their responsibility to remediate unsafe ACM cladding.

An addendum to the housing health and safety rating system operating guidance has been laid to give councils confidence to take enforcement action on such buildings, and the LGA will also host a new joint inspection team.

news in brief

Lack of care

A Coram Family and Childcare Trust survey has found that just one in five local areas in the UK reports having enough care for people aged 75 and over to meet demand. Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Councils are doing everything in their power to provide high-quality adult and social care support to adults of all ages in very difficult circumstances. Work to find a long-term funding solution for adult social care has been kicked into the long grass by successive governments for the past two decades and has brought these vital services to breaking point."

Suffrage pioneers

Women who successfully campaigned for the right to vote have been recognised in a list of 100 pioneers published in a special e-book. 'From suffrage to citizenship – celebrating 100 pioneers' is the result of a year-long project by the Women's Local Government Society, supported by the LGA and councils. The e-book lists women from all walks of life and parts of the country who were active in the campaign for votes. They went on to use the extended rights to citizenship in a positive way locally, becoming some of the first elected female councillors, magistrates and mayors. See www.local.gov.uk/suffrage-citizenship

'180 rotten teeth ops a day'

There were more than 45,000 hospital operations to remove teeth in teenagers and children last year – equating to 180 a day, according to recent LGA analysis of NHS Digital figures.

The severity of the tooth decay means the treatment has to be undertaken in a hospital – under general anaesthetic – rather than at a dentist's.

Excessive sugar intake is contributing to children's dental problems. Councils, which have responsibility for public health, have long called for the Government to implement measures to reduce sugar intake, such as cutting the amount in soft drinks and introducing teaspoon labelling on food packaging.

The LGA is calling for councils to have a say in deciding where the revenue from the soft drinks levy is spent. The Government also needs to reverse the £531 million in reductions to councils' public health grants between 2015/16 and 2019/20, which councils use to fund oral health programmes and initiatives to tackle childhood obesity.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "These figures, which have risen sharply, highlight the



damage that excessive sugar intake is doing to young people's teeth.

"The fact that, because of the severity of the decay, 180 operations a day to remove multiple teeth in children and teenagers have to be done in a hospital is concerning, and adds to current pressures on the NHS.

"There must be a reinvestment in innovative oral health education so that parents and children understand the impact of sugar on teeth and the importance of a good oral hygiene regime. Untreated dental care remains one of the most prevalent diseases affecting children and young people's ability to speak, eat, play and socialise."

Public health cuts

The Government has confirmed that councils' public health budgets will continue to face significant reductions, with funding being cut by £531 million between 2015/16 and 2019/20. Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "The Government has announced an extra £20 billion for the NHS, but is now taking vital money away from the services which can be used to prevent illness and the need for treatment later down the line. Cutting the public health budget is incredibly short-sighted and will undermine our ability to improve the public's health and to keep the pressure off the NHS and social care." The LGA will make the case for investment in local government's public health work in the 2019 Spending Review. See p24.

news in brief

Child poverty

The number of UK children living in poverty has risen by more than 500,000 in the past five years, with 4.1 million under-18s now living in poor households, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said councils face a £3 billion funding shortfall for children's services by 2025, and are housing more than 120,000 homeless children in temporary accommodation. "Government needs to resource and fully engage with councils to prevent homelessness, and support people into jobs to lift themselves out of poverty. Welfare reforms also need to be adapted to reduce the risk of homelessness and councils need more powers to build more affordable homes," she added.

HIV targets

The UK is one of the first countries to hit the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets for identifying and treating people with HIV, two years ahead of the 2020 target date. Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "It is fantastic news that the targets have been met in the UK – a success story that could not have been achieved without the key role played by local government. Councils have overseen a significant increase in HIV testing, deploying innovative methods such as home sampling and rapid testing in sexual health and drugs clinics, as well as targeting those communities most in need of support."

Winter deaths

Excess winter deaths in 2017/18 were the highest recorded for more than 40 years, according to the Office for National Statistics. Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Reducing excess winter illness and death is not something that can be tackled in the winter alone, nor something that the NHS alone can fix. With the imminent publication of the NHS Long Term Plan and the Government's Green Paper on Social Care, and the Secretary of State's focus on prevention, the Government has an important opportunity to take a truly system-wide approach to supporting people's wellbeing."

Blue Badge thefts 'up six-fold'

The theft of Blue Badges used by disabled motorists in England has risen by 45 per cent in the past 12 months, and is up six-fold since 2013, the LGA has warned.

Thefts went up from 2,921 in 2017 to

4,246 in 2018. In 2013, 656 thefts were recorded. The number of people caught abusing the scheme has more than doubled, with 1,215 successful council prosecutions in 2018 – up from 535 in 2014.

More than two million disabled people use Blue Badges for parking in pay and display bays and for up to three hours on yellow lines. In London, badge holders are exempt from the congestion charge, saving them around £2,500 a year.

Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Transport Spokesman, said: "Illegally using a Blue Badge is not a victimless crime. For disabled people, Blue Badges are a vital lifeline that helps them get out and about to visit shops or family and friends. Callous thieves and unscrupulous fraudsters using them illegally are robbing disabled people of this independence.

"Despite limited resources, councils continue to work hard to crackdown on this growing crime. More Blue Badge fraudsters than ever are being brought to justice by councils who will come down hard on drivers illegally using them."



Ombudsman sounds warnings

Local authorities have been warned not to "throw out the rule book" when redesigning services in the face of budget and resource pressures.

Michael King, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, said the way councils have adapted and innovated in the face of "huge" challenges "is to be admired".

But in a recent report, 'Under pressure' – based on nearly 40 case studies – his office identifies systemic problems stemming from councils changing the way they provide services.

Examples include: a council effectively rationing a statutory service by requiring more than three people to complain about the same noise nuisance before it will investigate; and another unable to explain how it came to a decision to implement a new parking zone, because all the people involved had left and restructures meant entire teams and departments had changed or been deleted.

The report acknowledges that the ombudsman receives relatively few complaints compared to the scale of local government services, and seeks to share learning from these cases. But it also reiterates that the ombudsman must hold authorities

to account against relevant legislation, standards, guidance and their own policies.

Cllr Peter Fleming, Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, said: "It is good that the ombudsman recognises the significant budget and resource pressures facing councils, and the impact this has had on local services.

"The report also rightly highlights how successfully councils have adapted and innovated in the face of huge challenges.

"Councils have done all they can to protect local services, maintain residents' satisfaction, and have embraced efficiency and innovation in a way that is not being replicated anywhere else in the public sector.

"However, unprecedented funding pressures and demand for adult and children's social care and homelessness services are pushing councils to the limit.

"With councils facing a funding gap of £7.8 billion by 2025, many are increasingly unable to provide dignified care for our elderly and disabled, protect children, boost economic growth, fill potholes, build homes and much more.

"Councils will now use this report to share and spread good practice, and make improvements where they can."

letters

A partnership approach to gambling

The LGA article (first 630) states that councils are not responsible for providing treatment for harmful gambling but that local services can help prevent it, and support affected residents and families.

The article barely mentions the role local councils should play in tackling this issue. As the local licensing authority, every district council has a statutory duty to triennially review its 'Statement of principles', or policy statement.

While there have been no significant amendments to the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005, the Gambling Commission's guidance to licensing authorities has not remained silent. It consolidated and updated previous gambling legislation in 2007, to bring together the vast majority of commercial gambling into a single regulatory framework.

The Gambling Commission encourages licensing authorities to produce a policy statement that is reflective of local issues. The introduction of a local area profile, which is to be made available to all gambling operators for assistance in completing their own local risk assessment, is a welcome addition from the public health team at the county council.

In Worcestershire, our public health team has requested minor changes to our 'Statement of principles' that relate to public health and gambling, in order to provide a firmer commitment to engagement with them in this area.

The latest consultation with Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) further accepted a substantive reply from GamCare, an organisation established to help problem gamblers by working directly with them, providing advice by phone, online and through face-to-face counselling. It is hoped that with this intelligence, decisions on the issue and renewal of licences can be better considered.

It is good news that the debate to alter fixed odds betting terminals' stakes from £100 to £2 next year is supported by the LGA. The causes of gambling may well be complex and not well understood but is this sufficient reason to avoid confronting an awareness of the problem?

Collaborative working with partners and voluntary organisations should influence how we view our local areas and assist with decision making that affects all of us.

Cllr Bronwen Behan (Con) Malvern Hills District Council

Online revolution

Sunderland has once again been chosen to help lead the digital revolution to provide people with better digital access to services.

We are one of the local authorities signed up for the Government's Local Digital Declaration, which pledges funding and support to the councils and public sector bodies involved.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Local Digital initiative is a nationwide movement established to help councils with digital projects that can be used by others. All those signed up to the declaration are asked to share ideas, and publish experiences and examples of ongoing, successful work in their individual areas.

As part of that process, Sunderland has been awarded £77,000 through the Local Digital Fund to work with a number of other councils to further develop a 'tell us once' online service for new and existing residents who are moving home.

This means that, in the future, residents will only have to provide their details once to update and access a wide range of council services, such as council tax, electoral services, parking and environmental services.

Making best use of existing digital technology, and looking at new ways

sound bites

Cllr Alison Thomas (Con, South Norfolk)

"So I'm home from @LGacomms #LGAwomencllrs2018 such an inspiring weekend with some fantastic cross-party female Councillors from across England. You've helped me get me mojo back watch out folks here I come! Thank you ladies x."

www.twitter.com/alison4stratton

Cllr Tracy Moore (Con, Tunbridge Wells)

"Frosty dog walk on #TunbridgeWells Common yesterday. Feel grateful for all that is unique about our lovely town - independent shops & restaurants, 400 yr history as a destination town, rich & growing culture options & 256 acres of common land (TW/Rusthall Commons) @TWellsTourism."

www.twitter.com/cllrtracymoore

Cllr Sam Webster (Lab, Nottingham)

"Spotted yesterday on my visit to @MyNottingham The Willows Day Centre in Bilborough - City Council Highways team doing some pavement resurfacing, the guys down tools to assist an elderly resident on her way to the shops. That's Nottingham all over. #Proud."

www.twitter.com/cllrsamwebster

Cllr Amanda Pinnock (Lab, Kirklees)

"Attending the WY Police and Crime Panel. Engaged in pro-active discussions around recruitment and training of more black and minority ethnic police officers in WY to promote diversity to reflect our communities @WYP_Hudds @WYP_BenRyder @WYPCP @MarkBW_WY."

www.twitter.com/ajp_law

Cllr Chris Hogg (Lib Dem, Cumbria)

"Pleasure to be in #Leeds today for @letouryorkshire stages launch. Glad to see it's going through #Skipton @GP_LakesDales @CravenCouncil."

www.twitter.com/CllrCHogg

Cllr Sarah Hewson (Ind, Gedling)

"Last night I attended @WeRHereOrg's 'Vision' meeting at @GedlingBC where I gave CEO Hilary Brown a presentation cheque for £678.10: the final tally raised by my ABBA/disco night last mth. This will pay for 15 sessions of 1:1 counselling by trauma therapists. #nottingham #gedling."

www.twitter.com/CllrSarahHewson

to develop it to help us meet our residents' needs, has always been at the forefront of our approach.

This latest government funding and recognition signal that this approach continues to bear fruit, and that the process will continue to help not just people here in Sunderland but across the country, as we all share our ideas on how to improve our services.

Cllr Paul Stewart (Lab), Cabinet Secretary, Sunderland City Council



What do you think? Please submit letters for publication by emailing karen.thornton@local.gov.uk. Letters may be edited and published online

features



Local government funding

There were some additional resources for hard-pressed councils in the provisional finance settlement, but they still face a £3.1 billion funding gap in 2019/20

The extra funding in the 2018 Budget showed that the Government is listening to the LGA's call for desperately needed investment to ease some of the pressure facing local services next year.

This included an additional £650 million for children and adults, and £420 million for roads funding (see **first** 630).

But while there was also some new money in the provisional local government finance settlement for 2019/20, announced last month, councils still face an overall funding gap of £3.1 billion in the next financial year – and continuing uncertainty about funding after March 2020.

The Government has decided not to increase the New Homes Bonus (NHB) threshold further in the coming financial year, and has provided up to £20 million to fund this. This makes up a considerable part of funding for some councils, particularly shire district authorities.

We also acknowledge that the Government has provided extra resources

to some councils in 2019/20 to cancel the 'negative revenue support grant' adjustment to tariffs and top-ups. It has also made an extra £16 million available through the Rural Services Delivery Grant, which will be welcomed by councils in rural areas.

The additional one-off funding for adults and children's services announced in the 2018 Budget is confirmed in the settlement. However, there is still a substantial funding gap facing children's and adult social care in 2019/20. An injection of new money from central government is the only way to protect the vital services that care for older and disabled people, protect children and support families.

The council tax referendum limit for 2019/20 will be 3 per cent, or the highest of either 3 per cent or £5 for shire districts. Social care authorities will be able to add another 2 per cent as long as precept increases do not exceed 6 per cent over the three years from 2017/18 – giving some councils the option of raising extra money to offset some financial pressures.

However, for shire districts with the lowest council tax levels, the new limit does not provide any more spending power, as they can already increase council tax by 3 per cent or more due to the £5 flexibility.

The LGA continues to call for the abolition of the council tax referendum: no national taxes are subject to referenda. On its own, council tax flexibility is not a sustainable solution to the funding crisis. Increasing council tax raises different amounts of money in different parts of the country, unrelated to need. This also adds an extra financial burden on households.

Further business rates retention pilots will enable aspects of the 75 per cent retention system to be tested prior to implementation for all in 2020/21. Consultations on further business rates retention and the Fair Funding Review have been published alongside the settlement. We will continue to work with the Government on these reforms, including tackling the impact of business rates appeals on local authorities.

The four-year funding deal runs out in March 2020. There is no clarity over funding levels, nationally and locally, after that date, hampering meaningful financial planning. It is vital that the Government provides new funding for all councils in the final settlement, and uses the 2019 Spending Review to deliver truly sustainable funding for local government.



The local government finance settlement is the annual determination of funding to local government from central government. We expect the final 2019/20 settlement to be laid before the Commons, for its approval, in late January or early February. For more information about the settlement, please read the LGA's full on-the-day briefing at www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses



Business rates

The 15 areas that will pilot 75 per cent business rates retention in 2019/20 were announced. The Government plans to introduce 75 per cent business rates retention for all in 2020/21, and published a consultation on possible changes to the system. The main proposals relate to balancing risk and reward, resets, the safety net, the levy, tier splits within areas, incentivising pools, and central and local rating lists.

LGA view: *“Extra business rates income should go towards meeting the funding gap facing local government and no council should see its funding reduce as a result of a new distribution system.”*



Council tax

The council tax referendum limit for 2019/20 will be 3 per cent, or the higher of either 3 per cent or £5 for shire districts. Police and crime commissioners, and the GLA charge for the Metropolitan Police, will have a limit of £24 on a Band D bill. Social care authorities will be able to increase their council tax by up to 2 per cent (over the 3 per cent referendum threshold) as long as precept increases do not exceed 6 per cent over the three years from 2017/18.

LGA view: *“The adult social care precept raises significantly different levels of resources in different council areas which do not necessarily match spending pressures.”*



Fair Funding Review

Alongside the settlement, the Government confirmed that it is looking to implement the Fair Funding Review in April 2020 and published a further consultation on its progress. The deadline for responses is 21 February. The consultation sets out the Government’s preferred options on the structure of the relative needs assessment and on measuring the council tax base, and outlines options on transition issues, including baselines and targets.

LGA view: *“Local authorities must receive as much advance notice as possible of their provisional funding baselines to enable proper financial planning. Any outcome of the Fair Funding Review will not be sustainable unless it is introduced alongside sufficient additional resources to meet the funding gap facing local authorities.”*



Commercial investments

The Government is considering intervening in authorities that are continuing to undertake significant borrowing for commercial purposes.

LGA view: *“Councils have been encouraged to find ways of protecting services by generating income from alternative sources. They have to follow strict rules and undertake assessments to ensure they invest wisely and manage the risk of their investments appropriately.”*



Fire funding

Fire and rescue authorities will be able to raise their council tax precept by 3 per cent in 2019/20.

LGA view: *“The reductions fire and rescue services will have to continue to find will have an impact on national and local resilience as well as operational capacity, and their ability to respond to unpredictable events... the referendum limit on their precept should be removed.”*



Brexit preparations

The 2018 Budget confirmed that the Government will have invested more than £4 billion in preparing for the EU exit since 2016. The settlement did not contain any announcement on funding to support councils to prepare for Brexit.

LGA view: *“Any new responsibilities or added financial pressures for councils arising from Brexit must be fully funded.”*

Independent voices

The scrapping of the housing borrowing cap, Brexit and community safety were among the issues discussed at the LGA Independent Group's recent annual conference



Councillor Marianne Overton
MBE is Leader of the LGA's
Independent Group

Our recent LGA Independent Group Annual Conference reflected our priorities for the year, covering the issues most raised by our members.

I opened the conference, along with LGA Chairman Lord Porter and the LGA's Dennis Skinner, outlining our successes, including funding for adult care, potholes, infrastructure and high streets, and scrapping the housing borrowing cap.

These one-off payments are important, but now long-term solutions are needed. Our own LGA social care green paper is therefore highly significant, proposing options on how to fund adult care, including increasing National Insurance and/or income tax.

Speaking at our first plenary session, chaired by Cllr Gillian Ford (Havering), the Earl of Listowel and Lord Adebawale both made the case superbly for better support of adults and children, including our proper role as corporate parents.

The Government seems to have pinned everything about Brexit onto one person but, in local government, we immediately formed a cross-party task force to seek opportunities and mitigate risks for our councils and residents.

Members of the LGA task force and European committees, Cllrs Ford, Clarence Barrett (Havering), Andrew Cooper (Kirklees) and myself, outlined what the LGA has been doing in regards to the Brexit negotiations. We are calling

“One-off payments are important, but now long-term solutions are needed”

for more details about the Government's proposed UK Prosperity Fund, which will replace EU regeneration funding, and targeted support on any extra burdens. Our councils continue preparations in case of a 'no deal' scenario.

Our lunchtime Speaker's Corner was very full, with brilliant three-minute member presentations from our councillors, chaired by Cllr Colin Mann (Caerphilly).

Cllr Steven Heddle, from the Orkneys – another place with a long heritage of Independent local government – impressed us with the formation and localised powers of an islands authority.

Our lively debate on the 'Big parties in meltdown' was chaired by Nick Golding, Editor of the Local Government Chronicle, and supported by Tony Travers, columnist and Professor at the London School of Economics, and Cllr Andrew Cooper, of the Green Group. We talked about the opportunities opening up for our members as the hold of big party politics is shaken to breaking point.

A housing and planning workshop

with Cllr Chris Townsend (Surrey) and the LGA's Nick Porter looked at opportunities resulting from the lifting of the housing borrowing cap. Cllr Cooper and the LGA's Sonika Sidhu led a discussion on what councils can do for the environment, while Cllr Barrett, with the LGA's Mike Heiser, ran a workshop on the Fair Funding Review and business rates retention.

A powerful session on community safety and public protection, with Daryl Edmunds, Lambeth's Interim Public Protection Operations Manager, and Cllr Hannah Dalton (Epsom & Ewell), was very popular with members. The LGA's new pay and workforce strategy for councils was presented by Cllr Bob Jennings (Epping Forest) and Nigel Carruthers from the LGA's workforce team.

Our Deputy Leader, Cllr Clive Woodbridge (Epsom & Ewell), led the feedback session and I had the pleasure of closing a very productive day.

The evening reception was enlivened by two speakers, Dr Wanda Wyporska, of The Equality Trust, and Emily Zinkin, of the Fawcett Society.

Another very inspiring day with cutting-edge discussions and debate, helps shape consensus for the future direction of the LGA and its influence on national and European legislation.



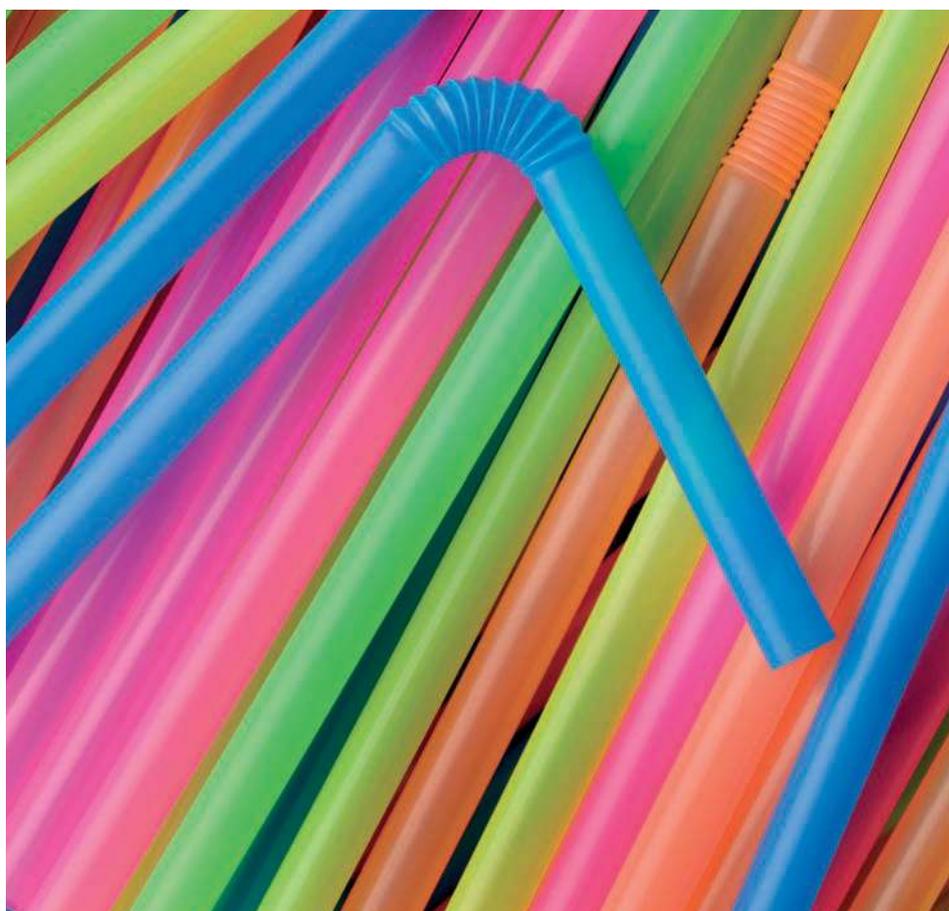
For more information about the LGA's Independent Group, please visit www.local.gov.uk/lga-independent



MAMUN HUMAYUN © M24INSTUDIO

Plastic revolution

Despite the financial difficulties facing councils, local government needs to take a lead on reducing plastic waste



Councillor David Hall (Con) is Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure at Somerset County Council

Single-use plastic has been an issue for years for anyone with an interest in environmental issues, but it really came to the fore in 2018.

That's partly because of TV programmes such as the BBC's *Blue Planet* and Sky's *Ocean Rescue*, which have highlighted the ecological impacts associated with the use and incorrect disposal of single-use plastics (SUPs), and plastics in general.

Concern expressed by consumers about the use of plastics is growing, and demand for alternatives is increasing. At Somerset County Council, we take our social responsibilities very seriously. Even at a time when there's so much on the local government plate, I believe it's important for councils and other community leaders to show the way and take steps to address the issue.

So, last February, we passed a resolution to tackle the use of SUPs and develop a strategy and timetable for doing so; this was adopted by full council last November. There are actions and objectives that basically boil down to reducing our use of SUPs, promoting

recycling and proper disposal, trying to control what is within our gift to control, and influencing others.

The latter includes reducing the use of plastics by council staff, on our estate and by our services; improving recycling routes to minimise residual waste disposal; and influencing partners, suppliers and providers to reduce their usage of plastics on the county estate and beyond.

However, there has to be a balance between ambition and reality. I believe in always aiming high, but this has to be a strategy that we can deliver on. That's why we are not proposing to eliminate the use of all SUPs in all services – nor are we trying to tackle everything immediately, in one go.

We will do our best, we will push wherever we can, but are conscious that it may not be economical or practical to eradicate the use of SUPs across all services and the whole of the county council's estate.

In some areas, such as construction and agriculture, alternatives may not be available or practical. In an ideal world, we would include clauses in all our contracts to ban the use of SUPs by contractors – but this may not be feasible or economically viable in all cases.

We have to take account of the challenging financial position of local government when letting contracts, and to continue to provide best value for money for our council tax payers.

This is about making a real commitment to make a real difference and we're at the start of a process that will see us do that. We will be exploring the wider opportunities while focusing on using our influence and contractual leverage – with contractors, suppliers, staff and commissioned services – where there are viable alternatives to SUPs, such as plastic bottles, cutlery, food packaging, stationery and plastic straws.

We will work with partners within the Somerset Waste Partnership, trading standards and other umbrella organisations to inform and raise awareness of the issues around the use of plastics with communities, schools, businesses and other organisations.

With so much going on in local government, it might seem tempting to leave this subject in the long grass – it's not like we haven't got plenty of other things to think about. It will be challenging, but we have an obligation to show leadership on this, and I think the vast majority of our residents would agree.



For more information about Somerset County Council, visit www.somerset.gov.uk. For waste resources and information from the LGA, please visit www.local.gov.uk/topics/environment-and-waste/waste



Preparing for growth in a post-Brexit world

Local authorities have a key role to play in ensuring government policy and investment is channelled to support local economies and businesses



Councillor Peter Box (Lab) is Chair of Key Cities and Leader of Wakefield Council

As Britain prepares to leave the EU on 29 March, the general outlook among the UK's local businesses, regional economies and local authorities has remained unclear.

To understand these attitudes better, Key Cities conducted research with YouGov, offering some valuable insights into the opportunities and threats 2,025 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the UK are anticipating in the post-Brexit environment.

Representing a diverse range of 24 cities across the UK, we have a vital role to play in developing the agenda and key policy asks for governments. In bringing this research together, we recently hosted our Beyond Brexit Conference to engage further with key stakeholders from industry and local government on their attitudes towards Brexit.

With uncertainty continuing around Britain's future trade relationship with the EU, one commonly reported concern is the potential increase in supply-chain costs.

Despite these concerns, our research

found that many businesses remain optimistic and are considering previously untapped markets for growth.

Interestingly, 45 per cent of businesses believe that international markets will be the largest driver of growth, post-Brexit, compared with domestic business activity (39 per cent). It is encouraging to see that local economies are already considering their role on the international stage and how they can benefit from new partnerships being formed.

Another key factor in determining the future success of UK SMEs will be their ability to adapt to new layers of bureaucracy and understand any changes in administrative procedures. Indeed, bureaucracy was reported as the most common cost concern in the survey (18 per cent). It is therefore paramount that future policy is targeted at keeping these costs to a minimum, while communicating any changes in a clear manner.

With previous studies indicating that Brexit is likely to accentuate regional inequalities between the North and South,

our research found the lowest levels of concern around rising costs in the East of England and Wales, while the North East, London and Scotland expressed the greatest level of concern.

Britain's manufacturing industry continues to be in the spotlight, with recent reports suggesting manufacturers are stockpiling goods to mitigate against the risks of a no-deal Brexit.

Although it remains unclear as to what the trading relationship with the EU might look like in the future, the survey found that manufacturing appears to be one of the most resilient sectors, with 56 per cent of firms stating that their exporting activities will remain unchanged. Unsurprisingly, two of the UK's services sectors scored highly on this metric, with IT and telecommunications (61 per cent) and the legal sector (60 per cent) supporting this view.

The survey findings highlight both the resilience of the UK's business community and its willingness to explore new opportunities. With 29 March fast approaching, it is more important than ever for local economies, policy-makers and stakeholders to work together to ensure that the UK's business community thrives in a post-Brexit world.

Britain's local economies are primed to meet the challenges and explore new growth opportunities after the country's withdrawal from the EU. Our cities are a diverse mix of communities, specialising in innovation to production and trade, all of which will be critical to the UK's wellbeing.

With our insights and experience of local conditions, we can help to ensure government policy and investment is channelled where and how it needs to be to secure a successful future for our nation.



Key Cities represents 24 mid-sized cities in England and Wales, with recent new members including Carlisle, Gloucester, Medway and Swansea. It is hosting a conference on 'The future of our city and town centres' in London on 29 January.

For more information, please visit www.keycities.co.uk



workers, business start-ups, freelancers and entrepreneurs. In fact, the people who use our work hubs are at the heart of what makes them so special.

Working in a shared office space not only helps combat feelings of isolation, but the inspiring and collaborative energy that our hubs create also offers users invaluable support through shared aspirations and the exchange of ideas and expertise.

Employees who may have to travel much further to work often use our hubs as a base, reducing the need to travel long distances to do business and meet clients.

The hubs are also built around supporting the local community, whether it's lunch in the nearby café, financial advice from the local accountant or the services of the graphic designer who shares the hub space.

Our work hubs have been so successful that, earlier this year, we made grants of up to £20,000 available to encourage local businesses and entrepreneurs to help us expand the network.

After a record number of applications, five new work hubs will open in 2019, which more than doubles the size of the network and means that small businesses in Devon looking for flexible workspace will have even more choice.

I'm pleased that our efforts to help small businesses across the region flourish were recently recognised at the Federation of Small Businesses Awards, with Devon Work Hubs scooping the 'Best provision of small business offices for upscale and growing businesses' award.

We are committed to supporting small businesses and encouraging them to prosper, and as we continue to develop and grow the Devon work hubs network, local small businesses will develop and grow along with them.

You don't have to take my word for it – businesses that use the work hubs can vouch for the difference it's made to them. Among them is Ewemove Barnstaple, a hybrid estate agency that sells and manages properties across North Devon.

Russell Burrington, Ewemove's Branch Director, says: "Having started the business working from home in our spare bedroom, moving to Barnstaple Work Hub just over 12 months ago has allowed my business to flourish and I am now at the stage where I am looking to expand my workforce and upsize my office space.

"Not only has it given my company a more professional look, but I have also made some excellent connections here and it is a vibrant and busy place in which to work."

An award-winning network of affordable 'work hubs' is helping small businesses in Devon grow



Councillor Rufus Gilbert (Con) is Devon County Council's Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills

Advances in technology, rising transport costs and quality of life are all factors that are changing the way people work. With a growing trend towards flexible working, people are enjoying more freedom and greater choice over their working patterns.

Here in Devon, around 20 per cent of workers are now based at home, with some

small businesses being run from spare rooms, kitchen tables and local cafés. The contribution they make to our successful and sustainable local economy in Devon is significant, and we want to help them thrive.

Our network of friendly work hubs can play a key part in that. They offer affordable, flexible-term office spaces for individuals and businesses, whether they're looking for a desk to rent, a meeting room for a day or somewhere to base their new business venture.

Run by local business people, the hubs are equipped with facilities that modern businesses need to grow, network and collaborate alongside like-minded people – perfect for home-based or mobile

"The inspiring and collaborative energy that our hubs create offers users invaluable support through shared aspirations and the exchange of ideas and expertise"



For more information, please visit www.devonworkhubs.co.uk

Community councillors



Councillor Phil North (Con)
is Leader of Test Valley
Borough Council

A long-term project aimed at empowering councillors to help their local communities continues to deliver results

When I first became a councillor, I felt frustrated because I couldn't deliver projects in my ward because the resources weren't there or were focused elsewhere.

Having worked to get elected, it was important to have the tools to influence change within communities.

At the same time, in response to the 'Big Society', the council wanted to develop a model that allowed a central role to be played by locally elected councillors in order to safeguard the interests of all of the community, and not just the most articulate and able.

There was a feeling in the council that to deal with these 'wicked' issues, a fundamental review of the way councillors and the council worked in communities was required.

As a result, we successfully applied to take part in the LGA's Keep it Real programme. The aim was to explore what levers might help give councillors a central role in the empowerment of their communities.

The LGA worked with the council over a 10-month period in 2012 to help facilitate a wide-ranging discussion with all councillors, staff and stakeholders. As part of the process, a members' cross-party steering group was established that remains active today.

We established five community-based pilots to use 'live' scenarios to identify what a councillor would need to make things happen to allow local communities to reach their full potential. The pilots ranged from a community-led rural housing scheme, to the development of councillor-led local action plans.

Five key themes emerged from this pilot work, namely a need to:

- Establish mechanisms and processes by which the council could empower more communities to identify and prioritise their own needs, so they can achieve their ambitions for the place they live in.
- Increase the profile of community empowerment across the council by



Test Valley presentation at the 2018 Innovation Zone

changing the way we work to respond to the different needs of our communities.

- Support local councillors in developing their role as community leaders, so that communities are able to take a lead on, and resolve, issues that are important to them.
- Implement a strategic framework that would enable the organisation to work differently with its local communities and direct its resources and support more effectively and efficiently.
- Coordinate the council's approach to localism by bringing together the different elements, including spatial planning aspects.

A number of practical steps have been taken. These have not happened overnight and some have required significant organisational change. They include:

- The development of a community team with a core function of supporting councillors in their community empowerment role.
- Creating ward profiles and using customer insight information to give councillors a deeper understanding of

the needs of all of their community.

- The better use of information-gathering techniques to allow councillors to understand public opinion in their area. This included the use of Survey Monkey, street surveys and facilitated workshops.
- Development of local action planning techniques to assist councillors and communities in identifying priorities, allowing them to influence decisions made about their local area and obtain funds for community-led projects and initiatives.
- Obtaining a £30,000 grant from the then Department for Communities and Local Government to develop a community planning toolkit.
- Working with partners such as parish councils, community associations and housing associations to help deliver these priorities.
- The creation of flexible funding pots, such as councillor budgets, a Community Asset Fund and community planning grants, to give councillors the resources to get things done in their communities. These grants are funded from the council's New Homes Bonus receipts

and are a direct way of communities benefiting from our new homes delivery programme.

- Access to the council's capital programme, subject to the local councillor being able to identify evidence of need using the techniques highlighted above.
- Officers from across council services meeting regularly to discuss place-based working and participating in place-based initiatives such as Romsey Future and Andover Vision.

So how has our 'Community Councillor' model made a difference?

Councillors in general have much more influence over the allocation of resources and have much more structural support in undertaking their role. In 2017/18, more than £330,000 was given and helped to get 103 local initiatives off the ground. These have ranged from small grants of a few hundred pounds through to five-figure sums for larger capital schemes.

Partners on project groups such as Romsey Future speak of a significant change in the way the council works with communities. Now, the talk is of partnership.

The new way of working has encouraged the council to empower its members to take local action whenever it can. This can have interesting effects on the ground. For example, Test Valley has more community resilience plans than any other council area in Hampshire.

The Community Councillor and Community Planning workstream has become an integral and vital part of the council's operating model, and is now deeply rooted in its culture.

Its success has in part been due to cross-party support that has relied on a long-term commitment to councillor and community empowerment. The council has helped unleash the positive energies of councillors and their communities!

There is a real sense of pride among councillors and officers that this way of working has enhanced democracy and has enabled the council to work in closer partnership with the communities it serves.

I am incredibly proud of how far we have come over the past eight years. Our Community Councillor model enables all members to do the job they stood for election to do, and to be a catalyst for change.

We are passionate about our work as councillors and we are now in a place where our resources better match that passion and commitment.



Make your mark at the 2019 Innovation Zone

Test Valley's Community Councillor programme was one of dozens of innovative local government programmes and initiatives showcased in the Innovation Zone at last year's LGA annual conference.

Test Valley Leader Cllr Phil North says the zone "provided a unique opportunity to share our success in this area of work".

"Our members are really keen to learn and the zone was a great space in which to get a conversation going with other councillors about their experiences and what's working well for them," he adds.

"We took a real enthusiasm from the participants that councillors can be genuine catalysts for change within their communities, and what's important is that we develop the support around

councillors to help them thrive in this role."

Applications are open now for councils wishing to showcase their creative ideas for making a big difference to residents at this year's Innovation Zone, at the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth from 2-4 July. Over three days, councils and partner organisations will demonstrate and discuss how they use innovation to address local issues by bringing their schemes to life in practical and lively sessions. Tell your story, share your lessons and help others multiply your success.

To get involved and learn more, visit www.local.gov.uk/conference or email innovation@local.gov.uk. The deadline for Innovation Zone applications is Monday 28 January.

LGA Annual Licensing Conference

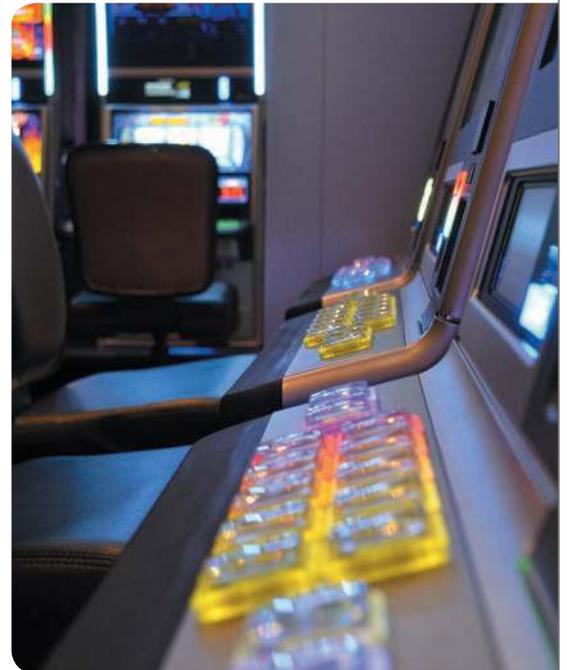
5 February 2019, London

The Local Government Association's Annual Licensing Conference provides an unrivalled opportunity to discuss all the key strategic and practical developments that can be expected to affect councils' licensing committees and teams over the year ahead.

The conference will examine the government's plans and expectations for licensing as well as exploring the challenges facing licensing authorities, highlighting innovative work being undertaken by councils and their partners and discussing how we can build on best practice.

Delegates will hear from a range of expert speakers drawn from all areas of licensing and take part in practical workshops covering issues including commercialisation, animal licensing and vulnerability in the night time economy.

To book your place visit www.local.gov.uk/events



LGA/ADPH Annual Public Health Conference and Exhibition

Supporting resilient communities: helping people to feel good and function well

London, 21 March 2019

Our annual flagship conference on public health will explore and build on the challenging, innovative work being undertaken by local authorities, their partners and communities as they continue to make progress on improving the nation's wellbeing and tackling health inequalities. This year's theme will focus on developing and supporting resilient, healthy communities.

Join us at our most popular health conference of the year to hear the very latest thinking on key policy and improvement agendas. Put your questions and comments to those involved in shaping them at the highest level and network with your peers to discuss the issues that matter to you locally.

To book your place visit www.local.gov.uk/events





Grand designs

Modular housing can help councils get small plots developed quickly and effectively



Dawn Dawson is Housing Director at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Gone are the prefab days – the new age of modular housing is well and truly here.

The latest modular houses gliding off factory shelves offer high-quality, flexible units, providing an ideal solution to the housing needs of forward-thinking local authorities.

Here in Nuneaton and Bedworth, we're well ahead of the curve, having just completed our first modular housing development on two former garage sites.

Designs can suit a range of needs, the units are of exceptional quality and can be delivered quickly. Our pilot project was commissioned in February 2018 and tenants moved in before the end of October, so that's just eight months from conception to completion.

We've taken the lessons from this experience and will be able to speed up delivery even more going forward.

Modular construction offers an opportunity to accelerate our housing developments by fully using the land we own. In our experience, it is sometimes difficult to engage with traditional developers for sites of about 10 units or fewer. By using modern methods of construction, we are able to use our smaller garage sites to build two, three or four houses, in a way that would not have been possible previously. When land is in such short supply, this is critical in helping us to address our housing needs.

Modular housing helps us to give people the right accommodation for their needs. It also provides a means to future-proof our housing stock, so that homes can be adapted to suit the changing needs of families and individuals, ultimately relieving the need to move to larger accommodation, or by allowing people to live more independently in their communities and preventing long-term hospital stays.

This housing option addresses our longer-term housing needs, as well as our immediate demand for affordable family homes.

Funding to contribute to this first development was secured through Homes England after the council was granted full Investment Partner status at the beginning of 2018. Now, experienced and confident in the delivery of the modular housing model, we are seeking formal tenders to secure suppliers for future projects of this type. We have developed our own suite of modular house types to address the housing need within the borough and will be able to deliver one, two, three and four-bedroom affordable homes quickly and efficiently, with minimum disruption.

Nuneaton and Bedworth has to build between 40 and 50 new homes a year to maintain current stock levels. Like most other local authorities, we have also experienced a rapid increase in spending on emergency accommodation for homeless families, making it imperative to address the shortage in affordable local houses.

While modular housing may not be the silver bullet that we are looking for to address the housing crisis, we believe it has an important role to play and is a fundamental part of our housing development strategy. Working with other local authorities, we will be looking to build a pipeline of houses to help reduce production costs and make modular housing a viable option, alongside other, more traditional, methods of construction.



To find out more, please visit www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk

Public sector officers from across England and Wales, collaborating to drive quality, efficiency, social value and innovation within publicly funded construction projects

National Association Construction Frameworks

By the public sector,
For the public sector

These best practice construction frameworks are designed by local government for the benefit of all public authorities.

Find out more and visit our website: www.nacframework.org.uk



Or why not hear from NACF at the annual LGA construction conference on the **7 February 2019**

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Local Government Association

LGA 19

ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

#LGAconf19

SHOWCASE YOUR PROJECT AT THE INNOVATION ZONE
BOURNEMOUTH 2-4 JULY 2019

The Local Government Association's Innovation Zone at Annual Conference is a vibrant, creative space for councils and other organisations to showcase and discuss how they are using innovation to address local issues.

To share the latest, most exciting examples from across the country we need your input. If you are interested in showcasing your work, please

apply on our website by **28 January 2019** providing brief information on:

- your innovative project
- the difference it has made
- the savings the project has delivered
- its relevance to other councils.

To apply for a place visit www.local.gov.uk/innovation-survey

THE NATIONAL VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

comment

Working together to protect cherished services



Dr Chris Llewelyn is
Chief Executive of the Welsh LGA

As we step into 2019, and I step into my new role as Chief Executive of the Welsh LGA, it is instinctive to reflect and look ahead.

The American author Hal Borland once said: "Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instil in us." For local government in Wales, experience tells us that we must be bold and brave in approaching the many stubborn challenges that our councils face.

Austerity continues to cast its long shadow over local services – despite recent declarations

to the contrary. Elected members will continue to have the unenviable task of having to make 'zero sum' choices between closing public toilets or ending meals on wheels; cutting youth services or ending music service provision; introducing fewer bin collections or cutting back on maintaining our roads.

It is argued that Welsh councils have been sheltered to some degree from the scale of blistering cuts that have been imposed on English town halls – but that is cold comfort when local services in Wales have lost more than £1 billion since the onset of the cuts, with councils having exhausted all possible options for efficiency savings.

For local government to navigate these choppy waters, we must be agile and awake to all opportunities available to us.

Council leaders have, in recent months, been engaged in impassioned dialogue with colleagues in Welsh Government. This has

resulted in an announcement of additional funding that still represents a real-term cut for councils, but is a welcome improvement on the initial provisional settlement. This dialogue shows that working together is essential to protect our cherished local services.

However, a renewed commitment to work in partnership also requires a renewed and refreshed agenda of mutual respect. Council leaders expect – and deserve – respect, as equal partners within the national government structure. With a new First Minister having been elected in Wales in the past few weeks, and a reshuffled Cabinet, I am looking forward with optimism to the opportunity to reset the relationship based on trust and mutual respect.

Despite the Herculean challenges we all face, we should not shy away from taking pride in our shared achievements. By working with Welsh Government on the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme, Wales' school infrastructure is being transformed; Welsh councils' efforts have resulted in Wales becoming one of the world's leading nations in recycling; and unprecedented investment is being unlocked in all areas of Wales thanks to councils pushing the regional and city deal agenda. These are all outstanding examples of councils' ingenuity and persistence in delivering for the communities that they represent and making a real difference in people's lives.

I am a true believer in local decision-making and the power of our communities. Local government is the tier of government that most profoundly affects people's everyday lives, the largest employer in vast parts of Wales, and the gatekeepers for some of the most important services in our communities.

As Chief Executive, I look forward to supporting the WLGA's formidable leader, Cllr Debbie Wilcox, and the talented team of elected leaders from all parts of Wales in staunchly representing, defending, and promoting the interests of Welsh communities and local services.



i For more information about the Welsh LGA, please visit www.wlga.gov.uk

Positive announcements in funding deal

“I am delighted that the Government decided not to increase the New Homes Bonus threshold as this is a significant funding source”

The provisional local government finance settlement, announced just before Christmas, contained a number of positive announcements for the sector: extra resources for some councils to cancel the 'negative RSG' adjustment to tariffs and top-ups; £180 million of surplus on the levy account distributed to all councils; 15 new councils selected to pilot 75 per cent business rates retention; and £16 million in additional funding for rural authorities.

I am also delighted that the Government decided not to increase the New Homes Bonus threshold next year as this represents a significant funding source, particularly for shire districts, as well as being an incentive to sustainable development in local communities.

The settlement also needs to be viewed in the context of the 2018 Budget, which contained various welcome announcements such as: an extra £410 million in 2019/20 for adults and children's social care; £420 million for roads; £400 million for school equipment and facilities; £675 million for the new Future High Streets Fund; and a further £500 million for the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

The LGA will be responding formally to the provisional settlement by stressing the significant funding pressures that councils still face while continuing our lobbying work in relation to the widely anticipated Social Care Green Paper and the 2019 Spending Review, both of which have the potential to put local



Councillor James Jamieson
is Leader of the LGA's
Conservative Group

government finance on a sustainable long-term footing.

Looking ahead to later this year, we have a key set of local elections with 8,846 seats being contested, of which 4,952 are currently Conservative-held, representing 57.5 per cent of current Conservative councillors.

In normal circumstances, the excellent work Conservatives are doing at the local level would translate into good results, particularly given the problems that Labour has.

However, recent events in Westminster have not been helpful and I would call upon all Conservatives, at both the local and the national level, to present a united front so that together we can deliver for the residents that we serve.

chairman's comment

Time for a sustainable settlement



Lord Porter
is Chairman of the LGA

The LGA has been working hard to raise concerns about the huge financial pressures on councils and schools arising from the growing demand for support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

So I was delighted when the Government responded by announcing an extra £250 million – £125 million each in this and the next financial year – plus £100 million to create more specialist school places.

It's a good start, but we are predicting the shortfall in SEND funding could rise to more than £800 million in 2019/20, so more needs to be done.

The same can be said of the

Government's provisional local government finance settlement, which was also announced last month.

There was confirmation of the additional £650 million for children and adult care services announced in the 2018 Budget, and some further new money, notably for New Homes Bonus and rural authorities (see p10-11). However, it was disappointing that the Government did not use the settlement to provide further desperately needed resources for councils next year.

Next year will be hugely challenging for all councils, as they face an overall funding gap of £3.1 billion in 2019/20. Many will be forced to take tough decisions about which services have to be scaled back or stopped altogether to plug funding gaps.

We must not forget that it is individuals and communities who feel the impact, whether it is through seeing their local library or leisure centre close, roads deteriorate or support for young people, families and vulnerable adults scaled back.

It is therefore vital that the Government uses the final settlement – expected later this month or in early February – to protect local services now, and uses the 2019 Spending Review to deliver a sustainable, long-term funding settlement for local government.

This will ensure the services that matter to our communities continue to be delivered, reducing the pressures on the rest of the public sector and contributing to the wellbeing of the nation.

“Next year will be hugely challenging for all councils, as they face an overall funding gap of £3.1 billion in 2019/20”

group leaders' comments



Councillor Nick Forbes CBE
is Leader of the LGA's
Labour Group

Waste collection and 'producer pays'

“Collecting food waste from street properties is one thing, but collecting it from high-rise buildings is entirely different”

It looks like Environment Secretary Michael Gove has again resolved to make 'government by press release' his new year resolution, starting with his announcement on standardising waste collection.

I don't think I'll be alone in being highly sceptical about moving to standardised waste services and making all councils operate weekly food waste collections.

Councils already have existing contracts that will need unpicking, and varying infrastructure that will need upgrading upfront. Waste collection varies hugely from area to area – and collecting food waste from street properties is one thing, but collecting it from high-rise buildings is entirely different.

And I have little confidence that there is any prospect of Mr Gove identifying a genuine way to fund fully either upfront costs or the additional ongoing cost to councils.

His latest pronouncement isn't all bad – councils have been calling for the 'producer pays' principle to be applied to packaging, with businesses or manufacturers meeting the cost of recycling or disposing of their products, so this could be a step in the right direction.

The test will be whether Mr Gove actually works with councils, rather than issuing dictats from Whitehall. Let's hope he will take time to listen to councils, rather than repeating the 'chaos theory' approach he took to school reform – because councils are still trying to clear up the mess he made with that...



Councillor Howard Sykes MBE
is Leader of the LGA's
Liberal Democrat Group

Funding gap means tough choices

“It is councils and councillors who are getting on with the job of supporting people in very difficult circumstances”

How many times can the Government kick the can down the road when it comes to local government funding? It's like death by a thousand cuts.

Local government will be facing an overall funding gap of £3.1 billion in 2019/20 so we are gobsmacked that the Government has not used the provisional local government finance settlement to provide further desperately-needed resources for councils next year.

Many councils have already been forced to take tough decisions about which services have to be scaled back or stopped altogether to plug funding gaps. We must not forget that it is people and communities who feel the impact – whether it is through seeing their local library or leisure centre close, roads deteriorate, or support for young people, families and vulnerable adults cut to the bone.

The nation continues to face huge uncertainty, as Westminster bickers over Brexit, and our Government is a paralysed shambles. It is councils and councillors who are getting on with the job of supporting people in very difficult circumstances. Investment in these local services, and councils' prevention and early intervention work, is just one way councils can continue to make a positive difference to their residents' lives.

It also helps reduce pressures on the rest of the public sector, save money for the public purse and contribute to the wider prosperity and wellbeing of our communities. It's a no-brainer really – so a shame we do not do it!



Councillor Marianne Overton MBE
is Leader of the LGA's
Independent Group

Budget setting in a challenging year

“We are still £3.1 billion short and longer-term solutions for care, health and devolution have been delayed”

Wishing you all good health, happiness and success throughout 2019.

Last year was incredibly productive for our members. We held 30 regional meetings, 'Be a Councillor' events, development seminars and a very successful conference (see p12), engaging hundreds of members across England and Wales. Thank you.

Our members have set budgets for a very challenging 2019/20, and readying for a no-deal Brexit, just in case. The Government gave one-off emergency support in the 2018 Budget but little extra in the provisional local government finance settlement.

We are still £3.1 billion short in 2019/20 and longer-term solutions for care, health and devolution have been delayed.

Our members have been working solidly on a waste strategy, published just before Christmas. Our plans to reduce waste and our carbon footprint and to improve recycling are vital. In Europe, I represented the LGA in discussions leading to an Environmental Action Plan for Europe, as well as influencing mayors in the United States and parts of Africa, sharing our expertise with thousands of other councils.

Most of our members are up for election this May. Serving as a councillor is a great way to use our skills to improve life in our communities and it is critical to find good people for the job. The Independent Group office, elected peers and executive are ready to help you.



For more information about the LGA's political groups,
see www.local.gov.uk

Social housing: a shared mission



Paul Hackett is Chair of the G15 group of London housing associations

Last year was a good one for social housing. That's not something that's been said much in recent times.

Since 2010, housing associations have been constrained by funding cuts and rent caps, while councils' planning and housing budgets have fallen by around half.

Many housing associations have relied on cross-subsidy models – increasing the number of homes they deliver to the private market to fund the building of more affordable homes. Plenty of councils have taken a similar approach; there are more than 150 council-owned housing companies across England, delivering investment into affordable housing and wider local authority services.

We should be proud of how we've adapted

to meet affordable housing need, but these models were never going to be a sustainable replacement for what subsidised housing ultimately requires: subsidy.

So 2018 brought some welcome change. Who would have thought a few years ago that social rent would return to government planning

“We are united by shared missions – to build more affordable homes and invest in the long term for communities”

policy and the council borrowing cap would be lifted?

Councils still face significant restrictions and, while the long-term funding announced by government last year is welcome, it's a drop in the ocean compared with what's needed for a step

change in delivery. However, taken together, these changes give us a chance to do much more.

It's become clichéd to say everyone needs to play their part in tackling the housing crisis, but it's true. Councils and housing associations face shared challenges: the need for bigger grant (and a greater grant rate per home); construction skills shortages; and a dysfunctional land market. But, ultimately, we'll always be united by shared missions – to build more affordable homes and invest in the long term for communities.

To make the most of recent policy changes, G15 housing associations want to work with councils, rather than competing against them. We're therefore pledging to help local authorities build homes, enter not-for-profit partnerships, share our development expertise, and take new action against homelessness.

Slowly but surely, it seems the shackles are coming off. Now we need to work together to make the most of this opportunity.



For more information about G15, please visit <https://g15.london/>

Public health cuts: a false economy

Cancer Research UK welcomed Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock's 'Prevention is better than cure' vision to help people live well for longer.

The future £20 billion for the NHS is also welcome; but the NHS is only part of the solution. These commitments must be matched by meaningful investment in public health, so councils can provide services that prevent ill health, reduce inequalities, and support a sustainable health and social care system.

A whole-systems approach to prevention in the NHS and local government is vital if we're serious about improving health.

The Health Foundation, a charity, has reported a £700 million reduction in public health



Stacey Arnold is Local Public Affairs and Campaigning Manager at Cancer Research UK

funding. This is worrying and reflects a system locked in 'treatment mode'.

To give one example from the public health portfolio: since 2014, spending on stop smoking services has dropped by 32 per cent – the biggest reduction in all the areas of public health provision.

We know political support for tobacco control remains high and yet, in 2017, half of councils were forced to reduce budgets for these services, with funding cuts cited as the main reason.

Smoking remains the biggest preventable cause of cancer and premature death, and costs councils as much as £760 million every year. When we know four in 10 cancers are preventable, reducing funding for public health becomes the falsest of economies.

We're calling on the Government to increase public health funding for local authorities in this year's Spending Review. We're inviting councils to support this by tabling our template notice of motion: see http://cruk.org/ph_funding_notice_of_motion.

Clarity is also needed on the transition from grant funding to 75 per cent business rates retention. Public health was excluded from the Fair Funding Review and has not been piloted outside Greater Manchester. We know so little that the prospect and potential impact of this rolling-out in 2020 is concerning.

Sustainable funding for public health is essential if we're to embed a more targeted approach to prevention closer to home. Only then will we be able to say prevention is better than cure.



“We're calling on the Government to increase public health funding for local authorities”



Fairer funding for the future



Councillor Paul Carter CBE
is Chairman of the County Councils Network

It will come as little surprise that local government finance was again top of the agenda at the County Councils Network (CCN) Annual Conference 2018.

With the two big-ticket items in the local government world – the Spending Review and the needs-led Fair Funding Review – expected to be finalised this year, CCN launched its new campaign, ‘A fairer future for counties’.

As we look to the future, I was struck by the optimistic atmosphere at the conference, buoyed by the recent funding announcements for social care, children’s services, and roads maintenance for the current and next financial years.

“Everyone agrees that the current funding system is outdated and does not reflect the realities of today”

Importantly, we have a team in post at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government that we can do business with, and who are acutely aware of the pressures we face on the frontline.

Secretary of State James Brokenshire and Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak had very warm words for county authorities, and both clearly indicated their willingness to work with us in preparing evidence for the 2019 Spending Review.

It was in this context, in my opening speech to the conference, that we launched the campaign, making it quite clear that CCN was in no way trying to skew the dice to the advantage of counties, but to provide Government with robust evidence across all parts of local government and the need for the new funding formula to be fair, needs led and evidence based.

Everyone in the sector is in agreement that the current system is outdated and does not reflect the realities of the present today.

I told delegates at the conference that counties may gain on the swings and lose on some of the roundabouts.

However, I believe that – provided the new model is fair, needs-led and evidence based – counties’ share of the funding cake will be proportionally greater than under the current complex and opaque system.

At the same time, we should be under no illusions about the scale of the challenges ahead and the importance of the Spending

Review in providing long-term sustainable funding levels. To illustrate the extent of the challenges ahead, CCN released new research, which showed that the cost of caring for adults with severe learning disabilities will rise by £2 billion by 2025.

I stressed that ‘A fairer future for counties’ is not just about money, but, importantly, about how we in local government shape the post-Brexit devolution agenda, when we must continue to press the case for counties as strategic authorities, with greater strategic planning powers that support accelerated housing delivery and infrastructure for growth.

As part of the devolution agenda, we must set out our case for change, where empowered local government can drive forward public service reform – particularly in health and social care integration that will allow people to live independently in their own homes for longer, and by expanding local community care that helps to relieve significant pressures on acute health services.

At the end of the event, we went away cautiously optimistic about the future, reflecting that, if ministers empower us – and if we achieve a ‘fairer future’ for counties – we can deliver.



For more information about the work of the County Councils Network, please visit www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk

Managing flood risk



Innes Thomson is Chief Executive of the Association of Drainage Authorities

When it comes to appointments to outside bodies, sitting on your local internal drainage board doesn't sound like the most dynamic position for a councillor keen to make a difference to their local community.

But these organisations play a key role in reducing flood risk to local people and property, and managing water levels for agricultural and environmental needs. Peterborough's surrounding countryside would revert to a lake if it wasn't for the work of its internal drainage board (IDB)!

IDBs remain a cornerstone of the democratic governance of water in England today. Each one is a public body, made up of

local representatives (including councillors, landowners, and other stakeholders and partners) with collective responsibility for managing water levels in their area – known as an internal drainage district.

The Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA), which represents water management authorities, is keen to improve the support available to councillors sitting on IDBs. So one of the highlights of our recent annual conference was the launch of the first authoritative and comprehensive guide to the role and functions of water level managers.

Our 'Guide to good governance for internal drainage board members' is a valuable resource for those serving their local community, economy and landscape. It has been collectively encouraged, supported and developed by the water management community, and supported financially by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

I hope it will increase recognition for the essential and valued public service freely given by IDB members, and help to expand their knowledge and build their confidence in their role.

“Internal drainage boards remain a cornerstone of the democratic governance of water in England today”

The new guide follows very similar principles to other guidance offered to local authority councillors, and covers the essential subjects of: roles and responsibilities; governance; delivery; funding and financial management; transparency and accountability; and the management of risks and hazards.

We are supporting the guidance with training events next year, and hope it enables current and prospective IDB members to understand and value the importance of getting involved.



The Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) is the membership organisation for drainage, water level and flood risk management authorities, see www.ada.org.uk



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Investing in population health



Dave Buck is a Senior Fellow at The King's Fund

We take it for granted that each generation will live longer, healthier lives than the one before.

Thanks to medical advances, rising living standards and, more recently, improvements in some lifestyle issues (notably falling smoking rates), the UK has seen nearly a century of increasing life expectancy.

But progress has now stalled, improvements in life expectancy are stagnating, health inequalities are widening, and England's health outcomes are mediocre compared with other countries.

In this context, The King's Fund has launched 'A vision for population health: towards a healthier future', which sets out what we think needs to happen next and why.

If we are serious about addressing these challenges, we need to move away from a system focused on diagnosing and treating illness to one that prevents people from falling ill in the first place and does more to support those who need it.

Two things are needed to make this happen. First, resources and effort should be rebalanced towards those things that

determine our health in the first place. All the evidence shows that it is the wider determinants of health that are most important. That means investing in decent homes and education, reducing poverty for those in and out of work, and improving the air that we all breathe. We should see these as investments in the health of the population and value, resource and regulate for them accordingly.

Second, stronger action and understanding is required locally on the connections between the factors that determine the health of local populations. Our report identifies a framework for population health based on four key pillars that affect health: the wider determinants, population lifestyle and behaviours, the communities we live in and with, and an integrated health and care system. We argue that local areas need to be much more focused on the interconnections between these pillars.

“Local government has a critical role to play, as a deliverer of key services and as the local institution closest to communities”

Local government has a critical role to play, as a deliverer of key services and as the local institution closest to communities. In the UK, local government and the NHS have separate systems of leadership, funding and governance, making this active coordination even more crucial.

For example, we know that decent, warm housing keeps people well and out of hospital. Yet there are few instances of where NHS funding is used directly to improve the quality of housing as a preventative intervention – unlike in health care systems in some other countries.

In principle this should be possible, as the arrangements for local system leadership and coordination to improve population health are in place through health and wellbeing boards, sustainability and transformation partnerships, and integrated care systems.

However, these structures have overlapping roles and their relationship is often unclear locally, resulting in a lack of consistently effective leadership for population health. We urge local and regional partnerships to use our population health framework to review their activity and leadership responsibilities for population health.

Local effort needs to be backed by national support and funding. We are pushing central government to focus the work of government departments, local authorities, the NHS and other agencies by establishing binding national goals for population health, underpinned by a new national strategy on reducing health inequalities.

Muddling through will not be enough to make progress towards a healthier future. Action at the national, regional and local level is needed if we want to continue living longer, healthier lives.



The King's Fund is an independent charity working to improve health and care in England. **For more information**, and to read 'A vision for population health: towards a healthier future' in full, please visit www.kingsfund.org.uk

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parliament

Making the case in committee

Ahead of the 2019 Spending Review, the LGA will continue to make the case for additional resources to protect local services now, and for a sustainable funding settlement in the future – just as it did in the run-up to December’s provisional local government finance settlement.

In Parliament, that work takes many forms – including giving evidence to influential committees in the Commons and the Lords.

The LGA’s Deputy Chief Executive Sarah Pickup gave evidence to the House of Lords’ Economic Affairs Committee, as part of its ongoing inquiry into social care funding. The session was an opportunity to highlight findings from our social care green paper consultation response (see www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk and **first** 630) and the funding options for social care.

Ms Pickup outlined the funding challenge facing councils’ social care services, particularly in the context of wider cuts to local government. She said this could not be resolved without consideration of new

and innovative solutions, including taxation, and that the results from our polling showed there was public appetite for increases in taxation in order to fund the system.

Ms Pickup also highlighted the challenges facing care providers and the rising number of companies handing back contracts.

She told Peers: “Business rates and council tax cannot be the only solution for services such as adult social care and children’s services, exactly because the pattern of growth in need does not reflect the pattern of growth in business rates, even in aggregate nationally... this challenge is not going to be solved without looking at raising additional national funds through taxation, national insurance, some form of new premium, or a different kind of targeted insurance scheme.”

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA’s Children and Young People’s Board, gave evidence to the Commons’ Education Committee, as part of its inquiry into school and college funding. Other local government representatives giving evidence included

Cllr Paul Carter, Chair of the County Councils Network, and Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director at London Councils.

Cllr Bramble highlighted the funding pressures facing many schools and the particularly acute pressures in budgets for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) – referencing LGA-commissioned research suggesting a shortfall of SEND funding of around £500 million in 2018/19. She called for a fairer funding system that adequately considers the wider impact on children and families.

Since Cllr Bramble gave her evidence, the Government has announced £250 million additional funding for councils for SEND (see p4). The LGA is predicting the shortfall in this area could rise to more than £800 million in 2019/20.

Responding to Ofsted findings that funding cuts are not impacting on educational outcomes, Cllr Bramble insisted “over time, results could be in jeopardy”. Local authorities and schools are under pressure, with fewer resources available for early intervention and prevention work with children and families, which could result in more children having to access statutory help.

Meanwhile, Cllr Peter Fleming, Chairman of our Improvement and Innovation Board, gave evidence to the Commons Science and Technology Committee on digital government. Appearing alongside the Office for National Statistics and Deloitte, Cllr Fleming said good local services rely on effective data sharing and he highlighted how councils are continually improving their use of data. There was recognition throughout the session that local government has done well to digitise services.

The LGA will continue to work with committees, and parliamentarians generally, to make the case for better funding for local government, in the run-up to this year’s Spending Review.



For more information about the LGA’s work in Parliament, please visit www.local.gov.uk/parliament

councillor



Working with officers

In the challenging world of local government, cooperative and collaborative working between all those involved in the governance and operation of a council has never been more important.

Partnership working, mutual respect and a shared vision are crucial. Councillors and officers are indispensable to one another, and together they bring the critical skills, experience and knowledge required to manage an effective council.

This relationship is unique and is not replicated in any other type of business or organisation. Although the roles are clearly defined on paper, in practice there are blurred boundaries – and sometimes overlapping issues, which can create problems.

Councillors and officers have a collective corporate responsibility. If they do not fully understand each other's distinctly different roles, however, this can lead to misunderstandings.

The most effective councillors appreciate the distinct contribution that elected members and officers make to the running of the council,

and the boundaries between them. For example, officers must act with political impartiality, serving the whole council rather than particular groups or councillors.

But they also understand the areas in which roles and responsibilities overlap, and councillors and officers must act together to provide democratic governance. If they work in isolation, and there is little or no communication between them, it is easy to see how strategic direction and delivery become disconnected.

This inevitably has a detrimental effect on services and makes it difficult for councillors to act effectively as community leaders, advocates and champions, providing the community with clear communication about priorities.

However, this partnership also involves a third dimension – that of the local community. Members of the local community are both citizens, with rights and responsibilities, and customers of the council. Without an appreciation of this vital third ingredient, community leadership and engagement is less effective.



The LGA has recently revised its **councillor workbook to take a fresh look at councillor/officer relations**, and examines issues such as the role of statutory officers, codes of conduct, behavioural issues and how to promote and foster effective working relationships.

See www.local.gov.uk/councillor-workbook-councillorofficer-relations

'Respect and honesty'



"Effective councillor/officer relations depend upon trust and clear and honest communication in both directions. You certainly don't need to be friends; what you do need is to respect and

understand your distinct roles.

"Consider officers' positions and their competing priorities and restrictions. This can avoid potential frustration or confusion about what might otherwise be perceived as obstructiveness. If officers don't appreciate your role as a councillor, it's better to address it than try to work around it, because it will cause problems down the line. My golden rule with officers is 'no surprises', in either direction."

**Dave Hodgson (Lib Dem),
Mayor of Bedford**



"The relationship between the leader of a council and its chief executive is a key one. When it is going well, there is very little a council can't achieve; if there are issues that

remain unresolved, the opposite is the case. Like any relationship, it takes time and effort to get the most out of it – it is a complex, multifaceted relationship that is neither static nor ever shifting in nature.

"As councillors, we not only have a relationship with the officers with whom we work, but also help mediate the relationship between them and the communities we serve. Sometimes challenging, always respectful, never forgetting that our role is a unique one to enable and effect change, both within the council and beyond the walls of the council offices."

**Cllr Peter Fleming OBE (Con), Leader of
Sevenoaks District Council**

elections

Turnout highs and lows

With the attention of the political world firmly focused on the unfolding chaos at Westminster, local by-elections during the past few weeks have taken even more of a back seat than usual.



Professors **Colin Rallings** (right) and **Michael Thrasher** are Associate Members, Nuffield College, Oxford



For once, maybe that reaction is justified. Just three seats changed hands – all involving losses or gains for Independent candidates – and in only one case was the outcome even remotely close, with the winner fewer than 10 percentage points ahead of the person in second place.

Yet some results do stand out. In the safe Labour ward of Belgrave, in Leicester, a high turnout of nearly 44 per cent (within the top dozen of all by-election turnouts since the 2017 General Election) saw the party's Padmini Chamund poll 87 per cent of the vote to finish an extraordinary 5,000 votes ahead of her nearest rival.

It was, by some distance, the largest vote and percentage majority any party in England has achieved at a local by-election outside a coincident General Election for more than five years.

The Ashfield Independents also registered a runaway victory in the Sutton Junction and Harlow Wood ward. The incumbent councillor, elected for Labour in 2015 but subsequently sitting as an Independent, resigned – and saw his successor triumph from a standing start. The number of votes cast could not rival the Leicester example, but it is notable that neither Labour nor the Conservatives managed to reach three figures at the ballot box, with the Liberal Democrats polling a paltry five votes.

This was the Ashfield Independents'

second successive by-election victory and is a warning shot across Labour's bows, in particular ahead of the May 2019 all-out contests

If those two examples betoken nascent enthusiasm for – and commitment to – local electoral politics, the reverse seems to be the case in Middlesbrough. The turnout of 9.8 per cent in Brambles and Thorntree was the lowest we have recorded in any ward not dominated by a student electorate since this column began in February 2011.

In all, there were 220 by-elections in 2018. They attracted an average turnout of 27 per cent, with the Liberal Democrats coming out ahead with 17 net gains and an increase of eight percentage points in mean vote share.

The Conservatives were down 16 seats, but Labour's gains and losses balanced out. UKIP lost all seven seats it was defending and polled a mean six per cent in those 50-odd vacancies it did contest. Add to that the steady drip of defections among its current sitting councillors and the party looks set to be virtually wiped off the local government map this May.



For more information about these and previous local by-elections, including breakdowns of results by political party, please visit www.local.gov.uk/first

local by-elections

Ashfield, Sutton Junction & Harlow Wood
IND GAIN FROM LAB
72.6% over Lab Turnout 38%

Buckinghamshire, Aylesbury North West
LIB DEM HELD
8.8% over Con Turnout 18%

Enfield, Bush Hill Park
CON HELD
24.3% over Lab Turnout 27.9%

Haringey, West Green
LAB HELD
29% over Lib Dem Turnout 24.6%

Harlow, Toddbrook
LAB HELD
16.9% over Con Turnout 16.7%

Leicester, Belgrave
LAB HELD
80.1% over Con Turnout 43.8%

Middlesbrough, Brambles & Thorntree
LAB HELD
29.6% over Ind Turnout 9.8%

Northampton, Delapre & Briar Hill
LAB HELD
17.3% over Con Turnout 20.9%

Oldham, Failsworth East
LAB HELD
29.5% over Con Turnout 15%

Oxford, Wolvercote
LIB DEM HELD
36% over Con Turnout 35.6%

Oxfordshire, Wheatley
LIB DEM HELD
29.8% over Con Turnout 31%

Surrey, The Byfleets
IND GAIN FROM CON
14.9% over Con Turnout 23%

Warwickshire, Stratford North
LIB DEM GAIN FROM IND
12.4% over Con Turnout 27.9%

Welwyn Hatfield, Welwyn West
CON HELD
21.7% over Lib Dem Turnout 33.7%

Westminster, Lancaster Gate
CON HELD
11.8% over Lab Turnout 27.8%

Windsor & Maidenhead, Datchet
CON HELD
31.2% over Other Turnout 24.7%

Wirral, Upton
LAB HELD
32.3% over Con Turnout 20.2%

LGA Annual Culture and Tourism Conference

London, 5-6 March 2019

Many cultural services provided and supported by councils also provide a driving force for the UK's visitor economy. This can extend our influence beyond local boundaries and even internationally through world-class events, festivals and heritage celebrations.

This conference will celebrate how very diverse authorities have used different approaches to successfully regenerate their areas through culture and tourism. Delegates will learn more about areas' major positive results in terms of economic growth, cohesion, and public perception and how to make the most of their local assets.

To book your place visit: www.local.gov.uk/events



LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition

12-13 March 2019, Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel

The Local Government Association Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition is a key event in the conference calendar for senior fire officers and members of fire and rescue authorities.

The last year has seen widespread change in the sector. There is a new inspection regime in place, a new standards approach has been announced and there have been a number of changes in governance. There have been strides to improve the diversity of the service as well as issues around finance and funding. The sector's work on fire safety, inspection and enforcement as a result of the terrible fire at Grenfell is still evolving.

This event provides an opportunity to examine these changes, consider notable practice and examine how to develop this activity further.

To book your place visit www.local.gov.uk/events

